

THE MIGHTY ASPARAGUS

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CALIFORNIA CONTENT STANDARDS

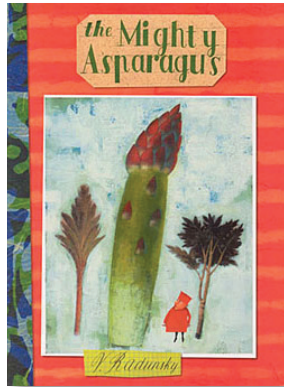
Kindergarten: Reading Comprehension 2.3 Connect to life experiences the information and events in texts. 2.5 Ask and answer questions about essential elements of a text.

Grade One: Reading Comprehension 2.2 Respond to who, what, when, where, and how questions. 2.6 Relate prior knowledge to textual information.

Grade Two: Reading Comprehension 2.4 Ask clarifying questions about essential textual elements of exposition (e.g., why, what if, how). 2.5 Restate facts and details in the text to clarify and organize ideas.

Grade Three: Reading Comprehension 2.3 Demonstrate comprehension by identifying answers in the text. 2.4 Recall major points in the text and make and modify predictions about forthcoming information. 2.5 Distinguish the main idea and supporting details in expository text. 2.6 Extract appropriate and significant information from the text, including problems and solutions.

Grade Four: Reading Comprehension 2.2 Use appropriate strategies when reading for different purposes (e.g., full comprehension, location of information, personal enjoyment). 2.3 Make and confirm predictions about text by using prior knowledge and ideas presented in the text itself, including illustrations, titles, topic sentences, important words, and foreshadowing clues.



GRADES: K - 4

READING LEVEL: 2.5

OBJECTIVES:

1. State at least 1 nutrition-related benefit of asparagus.
2. Describe 4 characteristics to look for when picking out fresh asparagus.
3. Name 1 way they would be interested in eating asparagus.
4. List at least 3 other green vegetables.

ABOUT THIS LESSON...

Through this “tall” tale and lesson, students will become familiar with the characteristics of asparagus, helping in selection at the market.

WHAT IS THIS STALK THEY CALL “ASPARAGUS”?

Ask students if they’ve ever seen, tasted or heard of asparagus, inviting their responses. Is it a fruit or vegetable? For those students who have seen asparagus, ask them to describe the appearance. Asparagus is a vegetable that is green like the Incredible Hulk; it is long like a pencil; and it has a tip that resembles an artist’s paintbrush.

What does the word “mighty” mean? What are some other words that have the same meaning? Some examples include heroic, powerful, muscular, strong, huge, great, and impressive. Why would an asparagus be considered mighty? Encourage nutrition-related responses. Since it is a vegetable, asparagus is definitely healthful for our bodies. Specifically, asparagus contains mighty amounts of folate, and is also a good source of vitamin C, vitamin A, and iron. Discuss the role these nutrients play in our bodies.

Folate – B-vitamin helping make DNA and RNA in order to make healthy new cells.

- Needed to form hemoglobin, the protein that gives blood its red color, and carries oxygen to all cells.
- Helps prevent birth defects that involve the spinal cord and the face.
- May help protect against heart disease and certain cancers.
- Per 1 cup serving, asparagus has the highest level of ANY vegetable, providing over 1/2 the amount of folate our bodies need in a day!



This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's Network for a Healthy California, with funding from the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly the Food Stamp Program). These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. In California, food stamps provide assistance to low-income households, and can help buy nutritious foods for better health. For food stamp information, call 877-847-3663. For important nutrition information visit www.cachampionsforchange.net.



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Vitamin C – Helps fight infection, heal cuts, and prevent bruising.

- Also helps form hemoglobin, the protein that gives blood its red color, and that carries oxygen to all cells.
- Works in our bodies to help absorb iron better.

Iron – Mineral needed to make hemoglobin, which helps carry oxygen to all cells.

THE MIGHTY ASPARAGUS

Tell students that they will hear a story about an asparagus that is mighty. (This story may be a little advanced for younger students as it includes some adult-type humor and concepts; paraphrase or omit certain parts at your discretion.)

When the story is finished, talk about the problem in the story and how they solved that problem. Discuss with students that when a problem arises, steps must be taken to solve the problem. Emphasize that there are always steps to solving a problem and that sometimes if the first solution doesn't work, you may have to try to tackle the problem a different way.

Have students journal about a fruit/vegetable-related problem they encountered and what they did to solve it. If they can't think of one, they can craft one. Perhaps they came home after school and wanted to snack on fruit, but since there wasn't any, they had to ask a parent if they could go with them to the market to buy some. Or maybe they started craving the meaty, unique, and wholesome taste of asparagus after the *Mighty Asparagus* reading! What is a person to do? After jotting down their scenarios, have students share their journal entry with a partner. Choose some volunteers to share their entry with the class.

WHAT MAKES ASPARAGUS BEAUTIFUL?

The queen referred to the asparagus as beautiful. Ask the class to name the adjectives used to describe asparagus in the book, and which character said them:

KING: amazing, ugly, stinky, awful

QUEEN: beautiful

PRINCESS: (Technically, she didn't describe it, but she sure wanted to gobble it up! How do you think she would have described it?)

ONE LADY: beautiful

OTHER CHARACTERS: mighty, amazing, huge

NARRATOR: humongous, stupendous, splendid, catastrophic

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Go through the story with the students and list each way they tried to pull out the asparagus. Put the different solutions that were tried in order. Then, using a Flow Map®, or a sequencing chart, write each step taken to solve the problem in its correct order.
- Students can also create a story map using illustrations of each step by step process in the story.
- Write another version of the story, describing another way they could have taken the asparagus out. Have students create a sequencing chart about the problem they wrote about for their journal entry.
- Discuss actions and consequences. Talk about these concepts in relation to the story. Explore the consequences of avoiding foods like vegetables (e.g., missing out on the nutritional benefits of vegetables).



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MORE ABOUT ASPARAGUS

- Asparagus plants grow for 15-20 years and are most commonly grown from one-year-old crowns (an underground stem from which the spears shoot), providing a crop more quickly than if grown from seed. The edible stalks are shoots that develop into fern-like plants in warmer temperatures if uncut.
- In proper conditions, asparagus can grow as much as one inch per hour — up to 12 inches in one day.
- Asparagus is harvested in 3 colors: green, white and purple. Green asparagus is most commonly grown. White asparagus is grown by burying the crowns under a foot of soil preventing photosynthesis. Purple asparagus spears turn green when cooked.
- Asparagus cultivation began more than 2,500 years ago by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Asparagus was valued both as a food and for medicinal remedies.
- Asparagus cooks fast—Roman Emperor Augustus coined the phrase “*velocius quam aspargi coquantur*” which means “faster than you can cook asparagus.” Over the years, this has been shortened to “in a flash.”

Based on what they know about asparagus, how would they describe it? If they were to go pick out asparagus at the grocery store, how would they ensure the asparagus they choose is fresh and beautiful? Characteristics to look for, and avoid, include:

BEAUTIFUL!

- bright green
- firm
- stands straight
- paritlaly open tips

NOT BEAUTIFUL!

- dark green
- wilted, wrinkly
- limp
- closed/compact tips

California is the top producer of asparagus, providing 70-80% of the U.S. supply. This large production generates \$115 million; now that's a lot! But imagine that one year, the popularity of asparagus has decreased and the state of California asks for your help in advertising the asparagus. How would you promote asparagus to the general public?

Decide what your ad will focus on. Do you want to portray how mighty it is, or how beautiful it is? If creating an advertisement that explains to consumers what makes an asparagus mighty, you can educate them about the nutritional benefits of asparagus. Or if informing the public about how to make sure they pick out fresh and beautiful asparagus, describe and draw what it would look like, using the recommended characteristics listed above. What are some other ways that would encourage you to buy asparagus? Perhaps showing them ways they could eat it? Use your imagination! Have students share their completed work with the class.

WHAT WOULD YOUR RESPONSE BE, AFTER THE FALL?

After the asparagus had toppled, the residents of the empire all had something to say about it. What commentary would students have? What would they do with the asparagus? Discuss types of food that could be created with the mighty asparagus. Ways might include cooked by itself until tender (yet still crispy), as a pizza topping, asparagus guacamole, low-fat asparagus cream soup, or maybe wrapped tightly in a whole wheat tortilla wrap!

THERE'S A LOT MORE GREEN WHERE THAT CAME FROM

Perhaps asparagus isn't a favorite of students at this point of their lives. Discuss other green vegetables they might like.



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